

Interview Subject: Michael Kinerk, Chair Emeritus and Founding Member of the Miami Design Preservation League

Date Recorded: 1/13/12

Location: 2655 Pine Tree Drive

Date of Birth: 6/15/52

Narrative: Michael talks about the beginnings of the Miami Design Preservation League and the first Art Deco Week, which started from an antiques display at the Cardozo Hotel and then moved into the street. Barbara named him to be her successor in nurturing and developing the League's influence.

He talks about how he was recruited by Barbara Capitman to become a part of the historical preservation movement on South Beach. He was trying to avoid becoming involved in her crusade because he thought it was hopeless. Plans were already in place to re-develop South Beach.

His partner Dennis Wilhelm was enlisted by Barbara and he convinced Michael to get involved, especially after the Cinema Theater, an Art Deco icon on the Beach, was threatened with demolition. Since childhood, Michael has been a student of movie theaters interiors and this drew him in.

His perception of Barbara was that she was "a mad, driven woman, eccentric and crazy." But later he came to see her vision and learned a lesson from her: never give up. He says her genius in marketing and presenting a package of ideas is what enabled her to not only persuade people to help her, but to her success at creating an appreciation for Art Deco.

He describes why the struggle to maintain the historic district is continuous: inappropriate development and the rehabilitation of hotels which destroy the original elements, interiors, hardware, murals, light fixtures.

A big part of MDPL's continued success has been its ability to get proponents to become elected to the City Commission. Two former MDPL directors have become Mayors of Miami Beach.

He talks about the effectiveness of Matti Bower.

He credits Capitman and Leonard Horowitz with establishing a network of Art Deco societies across the country when they did a national tour. MDPL was the world's first Art Deco Society.

Barbara started the World Congress on Art Deco in 1991 and it is still thriving.

"She was a classic outside the box thinker and I was the opposite."